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AUTHOR Yoast, Richard; And Others
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ABSTRACT

This manual is an introduction to community organizing for those who wish to work for the prevention of alcohol, drug, youth, mental health or other social problems. The materials show how to analyze a community and decide what problems need to be corrected, and then how to set goals and choose the best method of change. The manual also gives ideas to help group functioning, including strategies for increasing leader and meeting effectiveness. A list of additional resources is also provided, including perspectives on making community change, carrying out products, and identifying resources for group meetings. In addition, moderator guidelines are offered to assist the leader or facilitator in handling problems that may come up at group meetings. (JAC)

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What You Can Do

A Citizen's Guide to Community Organizing for the Prevention of Alcohol, Other Drug, Mental Health and Youth Problems

Written by Richard Yeast, Ph.D.
Director, Wisconsin Clearinghouse

Edited by Michal Avery
Wisconsin Clearinghouse

With contributions by Susan Christenson, Betsy Densmore, Nancy Kaufman and Marc Levy

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Introductory Notes

This manual is an introduction to community organizing *for those who wish to work for the prevention of alcohol, other drug, youth, mental health or other social problems.* It is written for people who have had little or no experience in organizing for community action, but who have an interest in changing how things are going in the area where they live.

We expect that this piece will be used as a guideline--it's up to you to decide what parts of it you want to use and how. You may decide to be more formal in your organization, or less comprehensive. You may begin a group that will prod the professionals to do more, or to act where the professionals plan. But remember, each of you is a powerful person with plenty of ideas, skills, caring, and an ability to learn and do things you've never done before.

It is our hope that this manual will help you to unleash some of your own and your neighbor's energies to make your community a better place to live and grow in.

NOTE: In addition to this manual we have created a community organizing workbook written for professional prevention workers and others working in social services. The purpose of that manual/workbook is to aid professionals who will be resources to community groups such as yours. It will help them to assist you in your group work and to facilitate your organization. Use the professionals in your community to provide technical assistance, know-how, labor, information, influence, etc. They need not be your leaders, or take over what should be your community's efforts, but they can be strong allies and aides for you.

Chemical abuse, youth related and social problems can be reduced by prevention efforts of non-professionals and professionals alike in every community. Parents, teenagers, members of social and civic clubs, educators, clergy and business persons can play a part. To be effective, prevention efforts need to have the participation and support of a variety of people in your community.

Who This Manual is For

This booklet will help you try one type of prevention strategy--*community organizing for prevention programs and projects planned and operated by your community for your community*. Organizing for action in your locale is the first step--one which is far easier than you may expect. Reading this booklet will not make you a prevention expert or a full time community organizer overnight, but it will help you to do the following:

1. analyze your community so as to make plans for preventing alcohol, other drug abuse, youth problems and to promote the health of your neighborhood;
2. decide which aspect of your community you want to address first;
3. set your goals and select the best method for making changes;
4. anticipate and overcome stumbling blocks;
5. outline a plan for solving community problems;
6. keep people interested and working together.

By showing this booklet to others we hope that you will be able to share your own enthusiasm with them. Each of you can be a leader and an effective worker in your group.

Part I. Prevention — What Is It?

There are many definitions of "prevention," but most include *activities which promote the personal (emotional, intellectual, physical, spiritual and social) growth and health of individuals and which strengthen those parts of a community's environment which support that growth and health.*

The purpose of prevention is to preclude, forestall or impede the development of problems.

Prevention tasks can be divided up into five major strategy areas. Your community's prevention plan will be most effective if it combines several of these, or all five. They are:

1. Public Information: Factual information about social problems (such as drug abuse, delinquency, etc.), examples of the problems, reasons or causes for them, and the availability of local prevention and treatment resources. The goal of public information is to provide the basic data upon which people make decisions about their lives. Public information may include the use of such tools as pamphlets, media campaigns, posters, public forums, debates, speakers bureaus, displays, etc.

2. Education: Activities designed to improve our thinking, learning, coping and decision-making skills. The goal of education is to change or reinforce behaviors. Values clarification, communication skills building, decision-making exercises, parenting courses, transactional analysis and open classrooms are but a few of the educational tools used by prevention programs.

3. Alternatives: Experiences which fulfill or surpass the feelings that abusing drugs or other destructive behaviors provide. Alternatives should make us feel good about ourselves and should provide a sense of accomplishment. Alternatives may cover the wide range of human experiences. Some examples are peer counseling, voluntary action work, sports and other physical activities, political action, hobbies, intellectual challenges, etc.

4. Community Organization: Action to make constructive changes in communities so that they are more responsive to the individual needs of their citizens so that conditions that promote problems are reduced or eliminated. Community organization should give us a sense of power over our own lives and make us feel part of a larger network. The community may be as small as a family unit or as large as a country. Parents' groups, community surveys, planning groups, block organizations, petitions and community night schools are examples of the many organization efforts.

5. Social Policy: Guidelines reflected in laws, regulations, standards, public plans, peer pressure and moral beliefs that influence our decisions. Social policies, written or unwritten, provide a standard with which we can compare our own behavior. Social policies may be specific (providing free New Year's Eve bus transportation) or they may be broad (such as a general disapproval of drunkenness).

In addition, each community also needs a wide range of remedial intervention and treatment programs which deal with existing problems so as to reduce their impact.

Why Bother With Prevention?

There are probably as many reasons for prevention as there are techniques. Following are just a few.

1. Prevention can improve our general quality of life by promoting the health and growth of individuals and by strengthening our communities and the organizations or institutions in them. Keeping healthy people healthy eases the burdens on costly treatment facilities. This is a community responsibility.

2. Prevention programs cost less for the whole community since they save individuals, families, friends and workers from the pain, suffering, lost time and permanent problems that accompany chemical abuse, youth problems, illness, etc. They can also result in financial savings. For example, the average cost of one episode of alcoholism treatment at a county health care center is approximately $4,210 (4 days of detoxification, 45 inpatient days, 15 outpatient visits), and it may not always be totally successful. Prevention programs often reach many people at a cost of $1-$5 per person. Only a few successes can realize large savings in future treatment expenses. By decreasing or stabilizing the number of people who develop problems, long range monetary savings can be realized, to say nothing of the personal pain and difficulty that will also be prevented.

3. Prevention work gives us the opportunity to take charge of and improve our own lives. It enables us to change the conditions which are harmful to us as individuals, families, and as communities. The end result is to expand the opportunities we all have for more rewarding and useful lives.

4. Prevention work can be fun! Working with people who are not in a crisis (i.e., needing treatment) gives you time to be creative, experimental and to share your knowledge and skills. Brainstorm new ideas. Try out new ideas. Try new approaches. Find out what works.

Part II. Getting Started

Where Do We Start?

We start by working together. Community problems require solutions from a variety of individuals working together in a group.

Forming citizen groups to work on local problems is a long-standing tradition. They are often begun by local agencies in response to federal and state laws. Unfortunately, members are frequently appointed to a Board or Task Force without knowing why they were chosen or what they were supposed to do. Such groups often get off to a slow start and wind up being ignored. Or they start with a lot of publicity and little direction. Often members become frustrated and stop attending meetings. Before long the "citizens' group" idea has become a sad and distasteful memory. Meanwhile, some agency goes ahead and develops a costly program which doesn't really fit what local people wanted.

This does not have to be your experience!

Instead, AN EFFECTIVE CITIZENS' PREVENTION GROUP should be a group of people who are persuaded that they have some interest in tackling a specific program together. This requires:

a. a statement of purpose

b. clear goals, tasks and roles

c. volunteers who are truly interested and motivated (sometimes for a variety of reasons), rather than merely being appointed; interested, motivated professionals who will volunteer their time because they care (not just because they were assigned, or simply because your tasks matched their job descriptions)

d. members who commit themselves to work for an agreed-upon time period

e. leaders, chosen by the group, who are committed to seeing the task through

f. an organization focused on accomplishing goals

g. continuing contacts with community needs and problems

h. a continuing dialogue with and the participation of the people employed by or involved with organizations/problems you are trying to change.

The rest of this booklet is designed to help you organize, focus and maintain an effective change group. Each group will be different and will experiment through trial and error. What's important is that you are organized and that the goals you set are comfortable to your group and relevant to the needs of your community.

Defining Your Target Community

The first step is to focus upon who you are going to influence and where. This is as important as setting your goals and deciding what you are going to do. The activities below will help you define the scope of the area where you will be working.

WE ALL LIVE AND PARTICIPATE IN COMMUNITIES. A community can be as simple as a few people who think of themselves as "us" and who have some common interests, concerns or activities. Or a community may be defined by others for you.

A community may be a POLITICAL UNIT (state, county, township, voting district, or political party)
or a place where you share COMMON PUBLIC SERVICES (schools, parks, shopping centers, utilities)
or a RESIDENTIAL AREA (town, neighborhood, block, housing development or subdivision)
or an INSTITUTION (church, neighborhood center, club, workplace, college).

Communities may be large or small. People in them may be similar to each other or include a variety of ages, classes, races and ethnic backgrounds.
TAKE A FEW MINUTES AND LIST THE COMMUNITIES THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO YOU.

The following categories and questions can help you define your community further. (Note: Keep the information you gather here for later on when you're planning your strategy.)

Social: Where do people get to know each other and interact socially? How do newcomers meet people? What groups are active? Do people spend time with neighbors or travel distances to see people?

Economic: What are the industries or sources of income in the area? Where do people spend their money? What is the class composition of the community? Is there a high level of unemployment?

Communications: How is information spread? What are the mass media outlets? (List all the radio and TV stations, newspapers, weeklies, etc.). What are the common informal means of spreading information (bulletin boards, clubs, conversations, etc.)?

Health and well being: What are the major health and environmental problems? What help or services are available or needed?

Values: Are there any "community" beliefs that seem to dominate or affect decision making (i.e., views about race, the elderly, drugs, youth, etc.)? How unified or divergent are people's values? What is the "community spirit" and how is it expressed? Sometimes, asking outsiders to describe your community will give you a new perspective.

Leadership: Who are the community leaders (formal and informal)? Which are the influential groups? Who are the people: who know what's going on in the neighborhood; who are knowledgeable, skilled, popular, or listened to by others? Look at both formal leaders, such as organizational officers or elected officials, and at informal networks (e.g., the bar crowd, or "gangs").

Demographic: Who lives in the community--what are the age levels, racial backgrounds? Do people move frequently? Are there many single parent families? Childless couples? Single people? Young people? Old people?

By briefly putting together all the information you've gathered from these and other questions you may ask, you'll have a pretty good picture of your community. You'll also find that you know a great deal about it and that you're involved with many aspects of community life.

You probably interact with and influence many people--by what you say, who you talk with, how you vote, where you spend your time and money, and what you want to see changed or remain the same.

(You may decide that you are really concerned with a particular organization, such as a school, which operates as a community within a community. If this is the case, continue to use the suggestions here by examining that organization in community terms.)

Organizing

WHO ELSE CAN BE INVOLVED?

The next step is to briefly decide for yourself what it is that you would like to see changed in your community. Make a list. If you know of a few others who have similar concerns, make a list together. Don't worry about the solutions yet.

THINGS I'D LIKE TO SEE CHANGED IN _____

Next, think about who else may also be concerned with these problems. If you know these people, fine. If not, perhaps someone you know does. Be creative--think about all the kinds of people who may be concerned with or affected by a particular problem. For example, if a concern of yours is drunk driving or vandalism, there are many obviously concerned people--neighbors, police, judges, local alcohol and youth agencies and groups. But perhaps others are disturbed as well--bar owners, teachers, the AAA, parent groups, business persons, students. Problems are often far reaching and affect many people in a variety of ways. Try to get a representative group of concerned people together to discuss the issue. Contact them personally.

Or as an alternative, you may just decide to get together a group of people with whom you've had some contact, and who you think are concerned about various local problems. Bring everyone together and let them talk about their concerns.

NAME	ADDRESS	PHONE	CONTACTED?

Group Planning Technique

Now you have several community members ready to do some thinking and deciding with each other. Even though you may not have started a formal organization yet, you are beginning to work as a group works. Some tasks you have before you are to:

1. Define and analyze the problem(s) you will work on.

2. Identify goals for solving the problem.

3. Develop strategies for reaching your goals.

4. Create an action plan and carry it out.

5. Evaluate your work.

All of these tasks involve group decision making. The technique we describe below will help you scan possibilities and select options. As you work on various planning tasks, your group can use this technique, adapting it to fit your needs of the moment.

1. Brainstorm: Begin by gathering ideas. Use a blackboard or large sheet of paper taped to the wall. Everybody contributes as many ideas as they can. The ideas are written up where the whole group can see them. Some guidelines are:

a. No discussion. Criticism and evaluation of suggestions will come later. Right now the goal is to be all-inclusive, to think of everything. *Quantity, not quality,* is the aim. (Even the most absurd suggestion may trigger a brilliant thought--and at least you'll know you were thorough.)

b. Everyone contributes. Another reason for not criticizing ideas during a brainstorm is so people won't be afraid to speak up spontaneously. But if it seems like some people are being left out, try going around the room, round robin style.

2. Now Discuss the Ideas: Does everyone understand each suggestion? Are some ideas similar enough to group together as a single listing? Feel free to add new ideas as they come up.

3. Setting Priorities: Since your group can't carry out every good suggestion, you will have to select the most important item or items as a starting place. There are several ways to do this. We suggest that you don't just take a simple vote. Voting at this point would create "winners" and "losers." But the main idea here is for everyone to participate as much as possible in the final decision so they will feel involved in the group and committed to carrying out the group's decision. Some ways to prioritize are:

a. To simply have an open discussion, allowing everyone an equal opportunity to speak. Group together suggestions that are very similar and vote. After the first vote, eliminate the bottom half (those receiving fewest votes) and vote again. Repeat this process until you have a decision on the top one, two or three ideas you want to address. During the discussion it may occur to some members that various options are closely related and perhaps should be combined. This will help to build agreement in the group.

b. Another method which will help insure that no one feels left out or defeated is to have each person come up with their own list, rank ordering the ten ideas that they think are most important. (This will be based on the master list that the whole group created.) When everyone has their own private list, ask the group: "For item number ... on our list, how many people voted this number one?" Assign that item ten points for each vote. "How many people voted this as their number two?" Assign nine points for each vote, and so on down the list for each issue. Alternatively, one or two people may collect all the lists and tally them while the group takes a break.

Once this is done and the points are totalled, you can identify your group's top priority items. Where possible, combine closely related ideas and reword them.

The final step is to take the top ten suggestions and, giving each person two votes, take a poll to see which are the top priorities of the group as a whole.

c. If there are more than 8 people in your group, you can include more discussion by having the larger group break up into smaller groups at this stage in the process. In the small groups, the goal would be to reach a consensus about the top priorities. In other words, everyone has an equal voice and consensus is not reached until everyone consents to the priorities. People do not have to totally agree, but neither should they strongly disagree. There's likely to be much rewording, bargaining, and give and take here, but everyone is likely to feel they've had a share in the final decision. Once the smaller groups have finished, then gather again as a whole and try to reach consensus between the smaller groups.

4. Finalize: The goal of your decision making is to reach a consensus in the group. That doesn't mean that everyone agrees 100% with the final decision, but it does mean that *everyone is listened to,* and *the concerns of each individual are considered* by the whole group. The final decision should be one that all or most members are willing to accept as being a *good* choice right now, whether or not they personally feel it is the *best* choice.

To reach such a decision, you will have to *balance the limited time and energy of the group with the need to reach agreement.* Don't let endless haggling spoil your meeting and wear people out. Expect individuals to put the well being of the group ahead of their personal crusades. On the other hand, a serious split in the group, with many members holding disagreeing views, may even warrant an extra meeting.

During the final decision-making discussion, your group may revise suggestions, combine several ideas in creative ways, or compromise between them. (It is often a temptation to try to satisfy everyone by agreeing to do everything. Don't let your group set itself up for failure by trying to do too much at once or by not reaching agreement on why you're working together.)

Defining and Analyzing the Problem

Identifying Your Focus

You may already have some ideas about what the problems are in your locale. Perhaps others agree. But some may feel that the real, underlying problems are not the ones you've identified. Don't spend time trying to persuade each other. Instead, use the Group Planning Technique described above to brainstorm, prioritize and select the problem area(s) that will be the first focus of your group.

Analyzing the Problem

Now that the group has chosen the major problem(s) it wants to focus upon, it is time to look at the problem(s) more closely. Here are some questions to ask (be sure to write down the answers):

1. What is it, exactly, about this problem that concerns us? Why does it concern us? (This will give some clues about some directions for your action plan.) What makes the problem a problem?

2. What factors contribute to the problem? (Some potential areas to look at are values, attitudes, behaviors, laws, what various agencies and groups do or don't do, and social factors such as the economy or social pressures.)

3. How do these factors relate to each other?

4. What other information do we need to better understand the problem, and where do we get that information?

5. What services are lacking?

6. What are the behaviors you want to change--both in the people who seem to have (or be) the problem and in those with whom those people interact (families, friends, employers, service agencies, government, teachers, etc.) The more specific you are the easier it will be to focus your activities.

(NOTE: It is extremely important that a broad range of behaviors be looked at so as *not* to fall into a trap of pointing fingers and blaming someone or some group. Saying, "You change. You're the problem," will only arouse hostility. Every problem has many facets and causes. A community's problem is the community's responsibility.)

7. What are the attitudes or thoughts you want to see changed? Who thinks that way and why? Is the problem a lack of information, misinformation, or a lack of skills or services for coping with a situation? Or is the problem a symptom of a broader issue involving serious underlying problems such as discrimination, group conflicts, value disagreement, etc.?

(NOTE: Although it is relatively easy to provide better information for people, that alone will not necessarily change someone's behavior or thinking. If the problem your group has selected is one involving attitudes or values, then to succeed, you will have to go beyond providing information and strive for relevant behavior changes. People will feel less threatened or singled out if they're being assisted in changing their actions rather than their personal beliefs. BESIDES, IT'S USUALLY WHAT PEOPLE DO BASED ON THEIR BELIEFS, RATHER THAN THE BELIEFS THEMSELVES, WHICH CAUSE PROBLEMS FOR OTHERS.)

8. Who are the people involved in this problem and in what way? (This will add to the information you gathered earlier.) The answer to this will give you an idea of the problem's extent and how many different people will be involved in the solution. Representatives of those people should be brought into your group as quickly as possible, assuming they share your concerns and some commitment to solving the problem. *Included here must be those who are part of the problem but seek alternatives to the current situation.* Of course, you need not include those who may be opposed to what you're doing, but communicate openly with them in order to minimize the likelihood of their becoming active obstacles. If their participation in your group is sought, you will have gone a long way towards minimizing their opposition and maybe towards winning them over.

Proposing Goals

The first step in proposing a solution is deciding how things should look in the future--your long range goals. When the problem(s) you've identified are solved, how will things be different? What services, behaviors, activities, attitudes will occur that are not occurring now?

The goals you set do not have to be immediately achievable. Some may be very long range. But they are your group's vision of how it wants an aspect of community life to look in the future. The more realistic the goals, the more likely they will be achieved. Letting your imaginations loose will set free a multitude of creative ideas. Allow both the pragmatist and the idealist in each of you to have a say.

NOTES

Strategies

Creating solutions is simply a way of moving from one place to another. You know where you are now (problems defined) and where you want to go (goal defined). Now, how do you get there?

a. Brainstorm all the ways of reaching your goal. Ten to fifteen minutes of brainstorming will produce many ideas. Here are some sample questions you might use to provoke thinking:

-What are all the ways this problem could be dealt with?
-What new activities or services are needed?
-If we had a hundred dollars how could it be spent? A thousand dollars?
-What could we do without money?

b. Discuss suggestions. Once all the ideas are written down so that everyone can see them, go back over and make sure that everyone understands what the ideas mean. In some cases they may overlap or possibly a few more ideas may come up.

Next, each idea needs to be examined for its usefulness. At a minimum, two aspects should be considered when evaluating an idea at this stage: feasability and relevance. Allow for enough time to adequately discuss the ideas and to begin focusing on ones that seem to have the greatest degree of agreement among group members. It is important that all pertinent data and biases be expressed so that alternatives can be fully considered. The goal is not unanimous endorsement of a brainstormed idea, but the development of a group consensus on an idea that all can support and help implement. This will possibly mean adopting an idea, adapting others, or in some cases, generating additional options.

c. Set priorities in the list as a group. The group should identify 2-5 alternatives that seem the most feasible and relevant.

d. Finalize your choice. Come to a consensus. The strategy(ies) you select may not fully achieve your goal, but they should move you toward it significantly.

Implementation Plan

Once a decision is made, a plan of action needs to be developed which clearly states: *what needs to be done* (Tasks), *by specified people* (Who), *by a certain date* (Timeline). This can easily be turned into an action plan (given to every member of the group) which will provide an ongoing baseline to measure progress.

As you enter the implementation stage, bear in mind that flexibility is a useful quality. Your solutions may need altering to better fit a changing situation. New information, resources, and people may become a part of your activities. *Successful community action encourages the growth of community participation. It's a way of taking advantage of everyone's imagination and skills.*

Part III. Taking Action

A Written Action Plan

You now know what the problems are, who's involved in them, how you want to change them, and what goals you want to achieve. It's now time to get beyond the planning stage and go out into the community. An action plan will help you to do this and to keep on track.

An action plan answers:

Who?

What?

When?

Where?

How, and to What Extent?

A SAMPLE ACTION PLAN would look like this:

Goal: To decrease drug abuse amongst teenagers in Fair City by improving family life.

Objective: What will we do: Teach parents new communications skills.

Completion Date: May 25, next year

Check in Dates: October ... May 1

How: We will use Parent Effectiveness Training and Transactional Analysis training programs for skill building

Who is Responsible: John Mac of our group to coordinate, professional teachers, clergy, school teachers, publicity committee. (Include names and phone numbers here.)

Where: Lovely High School and Memorial Church

When: Over the next nine months/completed by May 25th.

To What Extent: 500 parents and 100 youths will be trained. (Be specific and realistic about the number of people to be reached--these numbers may have to be adjusted.)

Tasks: Room arrangements (Mary Jones) arranged by January 1st. Publicity (PR Committee) completed by February 1st.

Resources: Money, people, things needed

Obstacles: I.e., lack of money, transportation, community fears, etc. (Each obstacle should have a means of solution and someone assigned for dealing with it--mini action plans may be suitable here.)

Goal:

Objective:

Completion Date:
Check-in Dates:
How:

Who is Responsible:

Where:
When:
To What Extent:

Tasks:

Resources:

Obstacles:

You now have a broad action plan for your whole group like the one mentioned on the previous page and similar action plans for individual projects or personal plans. Be sure to include clearly defined and manageable tasks, responsibilities and time lines. They can be adjusted, but expectations about achievements should be clear. Include times to check progress, to discuss and deal with problems that may arise, and to reassess where you are going.

Evaluation

Before you begin carrying out the action plan you also need to devise some way of measuring whether or not you have succeeded and to what extent, after the project is completed. This need not be a complex task, but it must be included before you start. Why? Because: (a) people need to see what they're accomplishing and (b) so that you can use this information for future plans and directions.

Beginning with your definition of how you were going to proceed with your plan, you can look for various signs of success. Did you do something as many times as planned and with as many people? Did the things you set out to change in fact change and how much?

It's easiest to evaluate your activities in numerical terms. You measure the success of your action plan by measuring the frequency, quantity, etc., of various items on your plan. Were deadlines met? Were enough people reached?

You can also measure the outcomes and impacts of your actions to see if your action plan was meeting the goals you set. If people were supposed to learn something, the results can be obtained by observation, testing, polling or sampling, responses to services offered, etc. Or you can make comparisons, between how things were when you began and how they changed after your activities.

If some sort of success-failure scale is built in from the start of your implementation, it will be easier to gauge whether or not things are going well as your activities progress. Your evaluation should be an ongoing process to help adjust your activities and expectations. It will also assist you in focusing activities on what's possible.

Don't measure your success by a failure to change the whole community. Make judgments based only on what you set out to do in a very limited, clear way. Everything else that changes can be added on as fringe benefits.

Additional help in evaluating your project can be obtained by contacting personnel at local social service agencies, colleges and your state government (i.e., local and state alcohol and drug agencies, mental health centers, departments of sociology, psychology, journalism, social work, and regional health planning groups).

Remember: Write everything down--action plans, time lines, data gathered. This will help people remember what occurred, what was supposed to happen, and what your group's hopes were. If you need to seek funds, or get "official" support or help from busy people, your written records will help convince them that you're organized and know what you're doing.

The final sections of this booklet contain some helpful hints on keeping your group together and functioning smoothly. Resources for additional help are also listed.

Part IV. Ideas for Helping Your Group

Making Meetings Work

Like it or not meetings and organizing go hand in hand. Meetings can be fun or a flop. Mastering meeting activities is a sign of a good organizer. If the leader in you needs a lift, think about these tips.

The Materials You Work With

Members, agendas, and that all-important first meeting are the ingredients of which your group's identity are made.

The First Meeting

The initial meeting is often the most important one. Some of the members will probably know each other but some will not know everyone there. Be sure to allow time for brief introductions and some informal discussion or comments. This will allow everyone the chance to talk immediately, thus getting over that barrier of making the first public statement to the group.

Agenda

Plan a written agenda beforehand. Clarify time limits. Can everyone remain until the end? In the first meeting the goal will be to identify the purpose of the group and whether the people that have attended this meeting are willing to join. A good way to start this process is for each person to express (either to a smaller subgroup or to the entire group) all their hopes for what this group can accomplish and why they came to the meeting. From these statements a consensus can begin to be built that is based on goals and priorities which participants have in common.

If there is agreement among at least a few persons that the group should continue, the question then becomes: "How will we organize ourselves to accomplish our tasks?" (See Part II.) If there is no agreement, try meeting with other people or ask yourself if there's another way to express your concerns so others will want to join.

Ground Rules for Meetings

Each item on the agenda should be introduced by a person who has come prepared to give the following information: a clear *definition of the issue,*

a summary of *background information*, a statement of the *action* the group needs to take (listen to an announcement, make a decision, brainstorm suggestions, etc.), and an estimate of the amount of *time* to be spent on the item. If all members have this information before discussion begins, the group will be able to work effectively toward a commonly understood goal, rather than floundering in uncertainty.

Membership

As you and others try to organize a group keep in mind that there are some characteristics to be sought in others:

a) Members should be committed to an agreed-upon set of purposes.

b) Members should be willing to attend regular meetings and participate in group work for an agreed-upon amount of time.

c) Members should be able to contribute different kinds of knowledge and experience or skills.

d) Members should have diverse connections so that their support will bring in the support of other groups.

e) Members should be comfortable with one another. That's not to say that there will be no conflict (indeed, conflict is often useful for bringing up new ideas or for spurring new activities), but they should feel free to openly disagree and certainly be able to work together in constructive ways.

Stuck for some ideas about where to look for people? Try some of these:

concerned friends and relatives

neighbors and neighborhood associations and community centers

anyone who's had a problem in the area of concern to you but with enough detachment to think clearly and creatively about it

elected officials

parent-teacher organizations

youth groups (YMCA, YWCA, 4-H, Scouts, etc.)

employee clubs and unions

civic and social associations and clubs

community professionals

local businesses

Some Basic Ground Rules and Tasks for Meetings

1. Each group member takes responsibility and actively participates. The group's success or failure does not rest on any one person, but is shared by all members.

2. Clearly define task roles in the meeting: facilitator or leader, time keeper, recorder and other members. Be sure everyone knows what is expected of them.

3. Write the agenda to include what you hope to accomplish within a given amount of time and with priorities so that most of the time is not taken up with unimportant matters. Provide the group with an opportunity to review and, if deemed necessary, alter the agenda before the meeting begins.

4. Have an agreed-upon decision-making process. Members should clearly understand how decisions are made and someone should have the responsibility for repeating those decisions to the group to make sure everyone understands what was decided.

5. Members should be fearlessly explicit. If everyone takes responsibility for clearly stating their views, feelings, expectations and confusion, it will be easier for these considerations to be taken into account in discussions and decision making.

6. Decisions must include: HOW to be implemented, WHO takes responsibility, by WHEN, and WHAT kind of accountability, reporting and follow-up there will be.

7. Include time at the end of the meeting to recap what was accomplished and to evaluate:
   a. whether or not the group was satisfied with the way the meeting went and what was accomplished
   b. individuals' involvement and contribution to the group
   c. the effectiveness of leadership provided by the facilitator *and* other members.

Focus the discussion upon how the group can change or improve its effectiveness as a group. What alterations should be made? All group rules should be open to renegotiation if the reasons warrant experimenting with a new arrangement.

8. Put your work in writing. To avoid confusion, misunderstanding and forgetfulness keep records of what your group has done and is planning to do. Write down the results of planning sessions, brainstorms, meetings, action plans, etc. Give everyone a copy, or easy access to it, and you will help prevent confusion and add to everyone's understanding of the group's progress. Besides, not everyone can come to every meeting they are supposed to or would like to.

Meeting Phases

A normal meeting goes through several stages. Understanding these will help you work with the flow instead of paddling madly upstream, and it will help you get back on track when the discussion wanders. Each stage addresses certain concerns:

Stage 1: Socializing: What's new with you, etc.?

Stage 2: Why are we here? What will we do?

Stage 3: What structure will the group use to work on the task at hand? What are the best ways to organize the activity?

Stage 4: The real work. Actually getting things done. Watch for conflicting or unclear goals or people who are confused about the task. You may have to go back to a previous stage and clear up the confusion. Stimulate work by encouragement.

Stage 5: Groups need a closing point. A summary, recommendation or decision about where to go next is in order. The group needs to feel it has accomplished something. Be sure to mention the work done by summarizing decisions and actions or discussion.

Setting the Stage and Acting on It

1. Finding a Room: Is the setting comfortable but not too comfortable for working? Is the room the right size for the occasion and number of people? Does the setting signify prestige (Mayor's conference room) or is it ordinary (school cafeteria)? Are you conveniently located and is there parking or transportation?

2. Controlling the Environment: Is there good air circulation? Is the room too hot or smoke filled? (Smokers and nonsmokers should be accommodated.) Is the lighting adequate or too bright? Is outside noise distracting? Are interruptions likely to disturb your work?

3. Where You Sit: Seating arrangements affect what happens. Circular or U-shaped seating allows everyone to have eye contact. Groups that can look at each other work better together. A traditional classroom set-up makes one person the authority and inhibits good discussion. Encourage different people to sit together at each meeting. This will reduce cliques and will increase people's chances of working well together.

4. Make a Date: It helps to set a series of meeting dates ahead of time (bring your calendars!) and make sure everyone has a list of dates. Send out meeting notices and an agenda well ahead of time. A phone call reminder system to keep people aware of the meeting shows them they're important. Reminders of tasks assigned and to be accomplished before the next meeting will help to ensure that the work gets done.

5. Make it Worth it: No one wants to attend dull, do-nothing meetings. Starting and ending on time shows your respect for people's busy lives. Set a task for the meeting and get something done. If background work is necessary, have tasks assigned beforehand so that time isn't spent on things that could have been done before the meeting.

6. Take a Break: Everyone needs a vacation from the group to get away and refresh themselves. Plan a break when the group seems to need it or when vacations are expected. Follow the break with a booster activity to bring people back with a bang!

7. And Once More: Make sure that your meetings have a clear purpose. It may be to exchange ideas and information, to build morale and unity, and/or to make decisions and arrange for work assignments. Whatever the purpose, it needs to be clear to everyone. Don't have a meeting just to have it.

When the Group Needs Extra Oomph!

Because meetings are where your group will make many of its most important decisions at times when everyone can learn about what's going on, they should be as productive as possible. The following suggestions are designed to increase that productivity:

1. Socializing: People want and need to be able to meet each other, to get to know each other and to feel that they're part of the group and can influence what it does. People work better when they feel familiar and at ease with each other.

   Meetings can be fun! Allow time to socialize and members will be able to concentrate better on the work tasks and see the whole process as a pleasurable one. You may want to serve light snacks and a variety of beverages as an ice-breaker. Or, you may want to do a lively group activity to stimulate thinking, wake people up or to get to know one another.

2. Using Booster Events: Occasionally plan a special speaker, luncheon, action film, press coverage or new meeting place. You can also plan a social activity to boost morale and keep people interested. Such events may even help you find new supporters.

3. "Getting to Know You": Learning and remembering people's names is one way for members to show that they care about each other. Try spicing up introductions by using a "name-game" exercise (i.e., have each person give their name and say something about themselves, such as, "I like to . . ." or "My favorite place is . . ."; then each member looks at one person at a time and repeats their name and what they said about themselves). In larger groups, use name tags.

4. Using the Thinking of the Group: The clichés, "Two heads are better than one" and "None of us is as smart as all of us," often hold true. Set up a group that can review what happened (the process) at the meeting to give the group and the meeting's facilitator feedback on what went well and what could have gone better.

5. Using Problems as a Challenge: When things go wrong (and they will), admit it. Look at the problem by yourself and/or with the group and think of creative solutions. If you know something is a problem, you're on the way to solving it.

6. Shifting Gears: If the group takes on too big a job and the sky seems to be falling, don't be afraid to stop and shift gears. Divide the task into smaller jobs and look at which parts the group can accomplish and which problems remain. Find other people to help. Set up a step-by-step procedure to tackle the jobs one at a time, emphasizing successes along the way.

Your Contribution as a Leader

You, the Organizer? Sound frightening? It doesn't have to be. Leadership can and does mean different things to many people. Leaders can function in many ways. They can:

1. Serve as a model or example for the group.
2. Help the group solve problems.
3. Encourage cooperation between group members.
4. Act as a catalyst to spark energy and life into the group.
5. Establish a climate that is conducive to problem solving.
6. Establish a process and guidelines for how the group will function.

As you can see from this list, the functions of a "leader" or "organizer" are not limited to the chairperson, or president, or any single person. A group will be stronger if it draws on the different leadership skills of each member. Group activities require a whole range of roles and skills and the active involvement of all members. Yet, even though groups are a constant part of our lives, we receive very little training or education on how to work most effectively in groups. Many individuals do not recognize the leadership abilities that they have, and many groups do not utilize the abilities of their members. Don't be intimidated by the word "leadership." No matter what your formal role in the group is, there are things you can do to help it along. And that is what leadership is all about. The pointers below describe specific things you--and other group members--can do to make your leadership contribution more effective.

1. Spread Out the Leadership: Sharing responsibility is healthy for you and your group! If others share the leadership, with everyone clear about what they will or won't do and what they expect of others, you won't bear all the responsibility yourself. When you get tired or down, others will be there to keep your cause going, and the cause will keep going even if an important member drops out. If the responsibility is shared, then when problems arise, there will be a group to work on solutions--and a group to shoulder the blame.

2. Not Every Group Needs a President: If group leadership is shared, then you are free to have an organization which reflects that. Perhaps you need spokespersons for particular needs, or someone to identify your group for others. If you don't get bogged down in a hierarchy of officers, but have clearly defined tasks for everyone, you will enable each person to share responsibility and to learn. Some people will be more active than others and will probably play more of a leadership part, but this need not be rigidly defined by titles, which often create in-groups and out-groups.

3. Clarify Your Own Role: What functions will you perform in the group? Do you see yourself as a member of the group once it is formed and thus interacting as an equal to all other members? Do you have a role as staff support to the community group because of agency or organization affiliation? What are your responsibilities? For how long? Have a clear understanding with the rest of the group about what should be expected of you--and what should not.

4. Know Your Own Capabilities and Limits: Define what you can and can't do. Don't be afraid to say, "No." Your ability to act may depend on time, energy, interest, personal skills, etc. Pass on jobs you can't or don't feel comfortable with. Don't be afraid to let others know your limitations. In a shared leadership situation this is expected.

5. Come Prepared: Take time to compose your thoughts and free your mind of other problems before a meeting. How people see and work with you depends on how you devote yourself to the task at hand. Your momentous achievements earlier in the day are not known to the rest of the group. *Now* is what counts.

   (In groups where people feel at ease with each other, they sometimes take time at the beginning of the meeting for each person to briefly say how they're feeling or what's on their mind. This can provide a transition from other concerns into the meeting as well as helping members feel in touch with each other.)

6. Dress Appropriately: Hair, clothes and general appearance are important when working with people. They can be distracting or helpful. Dress like the average person in the group. Avoid extremes such as flashy clothes, low cut dresses, or too much after-shave.

7. Let People Know What You're Doing: The more people know about and understand your work, the easier it will be for them to support and help you. If you want community acceptance, involve people in what you're doing. Good public relations is the key here. A high level of communications within a group will help avoid the formation of in- and out-groups. Everyone's best thinking will be utilized. Continuous contact with the groups you're trying to influence is absolutely essential. You need to know what they're thinking, why they agree or disagree with you. And they need to know the same about you.

8. Share Responsibilities: If your group's success depends upon everyone in the group, then the failure or withdrawal of one person will not destroy the whole effort. Community reactions will be based on your group's efforts rather than on feelings about one individual. One person's energy, skills or charisma may fuel everyone else. But, if it is part of a group effort

rather than an individual show, the group will derive more energy from that shared sense of common purpose, responsibility and activity.

9. Keep People Active: People given important tasks and decisions often stay motivated. Assess each person's skills and time commitments and seek their assistance with appropriate tasks. Help the group distribute tasks so that everyone can use his/her skills and energy.

10. Communicate With Others as an Equal: No one likes a leader who forces his/her will on everyone else. You'll get much more work done if you see yourself as an equal to others in the group, and as temporary holder of a leadership assignment. Talk to people between meetings and activities. Ask for group advice, look at decision making as a shared group activity, and share the good and bad news, the credit and the blame.

11. Give and Get Feedback: Everyone, including you, needs to know when he/she is doing well or could do better. Organizing takes energy and we all need praise to refuel. Make sure that everyone in your group gets positive feedback from time to time. If you need to give negative feedback, separate what it is that the person did poorly from your feelings about them as a whole. You can like a person but dislike something they do or how they do it. Offer positive suggestions about how something may be improved the next time rather than attacking someone or telling them how poorly they did. If you must vent your feelings, admit that they are your feelings and are not necessarily the result of what that person did. All the venting in the world will not change what has already occurred.

12. Find People Who Have Time: This isn't as easy as it sounds. Among those "willing" volunteers are people who aren't really committed to the cause. Through experience, get to know those who can be counted on. Keep this in mind when tasks are assigned. Analyze why people want to be involved and help fill their needs by giving them appropriate jobs and opportunities in their areas of interest. (E.g., the person who wants to rub elbows with important people might be assigned media coverage.)

13. Watch for Too Much Success: Success can be scary. Responsibility and attention can be uncomfortable for some people. Being pushed into the limelight can be startling. Look for these situations and give people extra encouragement. Talking about what's scary often makes it less of a problem.

14. Analyze Frustrating Failures: Things go wrong. When they do, it helps to look at them and find out what happened. Do it yourself, or get a friend or the group to help. Jot down the sequence of events, why they happened, what you did right, and what could have been done differently. Ask others who have had similar experiences for their ideas. Find alternative ways of getting the job done. And keep your chin up! All of us run into stumbling blocks. Working your way around them will make you stronger.

15. Rethink Your Goals: From time to time, it helps to step back and look at your hopes and accomplishments. Were your goals realistic? Have you accomplished some of what you set out to do? How can you change your tactics to better meet your goals? Do your goals need redefining?

16. When You Need to Scream: Realize that organizing has its ups and downs. Find a sympathetic person or a good listener and talk about your frustrations. Try and remember the ups that make it worthwhile. Patience and flexibility are essential to organizing. Stick to it for awhile and see what happens. Try again! Fire up!

Resources

The items listed below are to assist your organizing and prevention efforts. They have been chosen with the idea that some will be relevant to your areas of need. (Note: all prices subject to change, of course. Starred items are especially recommended.)

Further background in Prevention:

National Institute on Drug Abuse: *Alternative Pursuits for America's Third Century*, and *It Starts With People* (single copies free from NIDA, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, MD 20857); *Primary Prevention In Drug Abuse: An Annotated Guide to the Literature*, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402 ($2.60, Order #5N 017-024-00561-4)

*Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Dept. of Justice, Law Enforcement Assistance Admin., Washington, D.C.: Grant Johnson, Tom Bird, Judith Warren Little, *Delinquency Prevention: Theories and Strategies* (single copies free)

Price, Richard H., ed., *Prevention in Mental Health*, Sage Publications, 275 South Beverly Drive, Beverly Hills, CA 90212 (in paperback)

*Project Pyramid, 3746 Mt. Diablo Blvd., Suite 200, Lafayette, CA 94549 (Phone: 800-227-0438): *Teaching Tools for Primary Prevention--A Guide to Classroom Curricula* (single copies free). This agency, although funded to work primarily in drug abuse prevention, is an excellent all-around resource and technical assistance provider for prevention ideas.

For some general data and information on social problems:

*General Mills, Inc., 9200 Wayzata Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55440: *Raising Children in a Changing Society; 1978-9 Family Health in an Era of Stress* (single copies free)

For some ideas and perspectives on making community change:

Creating the Future by Charles Beitz, Michael Washburn, Bantam Books, Inc., 666 Fifth Avenue, New York, NY 10019 ($1.95)

Facilitating Community Change--A Basic Guide by Donald R. Fessler, University Associates, 7596 Eads Ave., La Jolla, CA 92037 ($7.50). (Ask for their catalog which contains many resources of use to organizers.)

**Making Change* by Eileen Guthrie and Sam Miller. Consultants for Community Development, 2535 Columbus Ave.-South, Minneapolis, MN ($6.00) A book about how to effect community change as an individual or member of a support group, neighborhood organization, board of directors, or other political group. Organizing skills, conflict diagnosis and resolution, communication skills and running meetings are all included in the context of neighborhood/community change.

Organizing School Volunteer Programs by Barbara Carter, Gloria Dapper, Citation Press, Scholastic Magazines, Inc., 50 W. 44th Street, New York, NY 10036 ($3.50)

Rules for Radicals, by Saul Alinsky, Vintage Books (Random House, Inc.) 201 E. 50th Street, New York, NY 10022 ($1.95)

Source Catalog 3--Organizing for Health Care. A Tool for Change, by Source Collective, Beacon Press, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, MS 02108 ($5.95)

For help in carrying out your projects:

From Wisconsin Clearinghouse, 1954 E. Washington Ave., Madison, WI 53704:

**Getting the Word Out* ($7.35, includes postage), 74 pp., looseleaf in binder: a manual for public information, PR and publicity.

Projecting: A Facilitator's Guide to Alcohol and Other Drug Film Utilization by Janice Kinsolving ($3.25, includes postage), 56 pp: a manual for selecting and using films.

**A Manual for Group Facilitators* by B. Auvine et al., 1977, ($5.50, includes postage), 88 pp. The manual is designed for almost any sort of group where a person has been called upon to facilitate a meeting. It has information on values, homework and preparation, meeting and agenda structure, dealing with problems, and other related topic areas. A good basic approach for community groups, social agencies and alternative and activist groups.

Further resources for running your group meetings (compiled and annotated by Janice Kinsolving of the Center for Conflict Resolution, Madison, WI):

Annual Handbook for Group Facilitators, edited by J. William Pfeiffer and John Jones, University Associates Publishers, Inc., 7596 Eads Ave., La Jolla, CA 92037. 1972 to the present. Cost and size vary every year. A wealth of information coming out every year on how to run groups. Structured experiences, lecturettes, resources, research, theory and practice, and other topics. How-to-do-it books.

**Building United Judgment: A Handbook for Consensus Decision Making,* by M. Avery, et al., 1981 ($5 + postage) Center for Conflict Resolution, 731 State Street, Madison, WI 53703. Describes skills necessary for group decision making, both where consensus is used and when other alternatives are employed. Includes: group structuring, agenda building, facilitation, conflict and problem solving, communication, and building group cohesion.

"Face-Saving, Criticism and Defensiveness," by Celeste Rice (in press) Center for Conflict Resolution, 731 State Street, Madison, WI 53703. A well-researched article that integrates scholarly and practical information in the constructive criticism area. It addresses reducing defensiveness in ourselves and others, and how to give and receive critical, constructive feedback.

"Groupthink" by Irving L. Janis (p. 43), "Selective Inattention," by Ralph White (p. 47), "Decisions, Decisions, Decisions," by Jay Hall,(p. 51), *Psychology Today*, November, 1971, Vol. 5, No. 6. These three articles are concerned with group conformity in making decisions. The first two look at group dynamics in high places and how conformity has led to disastrous decisions and war. The last article by Hall defends group decision making and explains how it can be creative.

Group Techniques for Program Planning: A Guide to Nominal and Delphi Processes, by Andre Delbecq, Andrew H. Van de Van, and David H. Gustafson, Scott, Foresman and Company, 1975. A straight presentation of two highly adaptable methods for getting involvement in decision making from large groups of people. A good look at some of the more "progressive" work of American business schools in the 70's. Very useful techniques.

**A Handbook of Structured Experiences for Human Relations*, edited by J. William Pfeiffer and John Jones, University Associates Publishers, Inc., 7596 Eads Ave., La Jolla, CA 92037. 1972 to present. Price varies each year. This is an excellent series of exercises that are applicable to a wide array of groups and training situations. Exercises range in diversity from problem solving situations to awareness through movement to male-female role plays. If you are looking for an exercise to use with your group, these books are a good place to start.

**Joining Together: Group Theory and Group Skills*, by David and Frank Johnson, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, NJ. 1975, 470 pp. A theory and practice book of group dynamics with lots about leadership, conflict, communication, and decision making. Watch out! It's thick, but it has tons of exercises along with good instructions on who's supposed to be doing what in each one of them. It's often used as a text in group dynamics in universities around the country.

From Movement for a New Society, 4722 Baltimore Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19143:

Leadership for Change, by Bruce Kokopeli, George Lakey, 1978, 32 pp. ($1.25). Traditional "patriarchal" leadership is compared to "feminist" or shared leadership in groups. Tactics for changing leadership style are described.

Meeting Facilitation: The No Magic Method, by Berit Lakey, 1975, 6 pp ($.60). A brief how-to for effectively coordinating decision making in meetings.

**Resource Manual for a Living Revolution*, by Virginia Coover, Ellen Deacon, Charles Esser and Christopher Moore, 1977, 369 pp. ($5.00). An excellent resource for activists, teachers, social workers, community people and others interested in preparing themselves for community action and social change. Includes theory of social change (nonviolent approach), interpersonal skills for working with groups, community organizing, building support networks, and many useful exercises. It provides a comprehensive basis for building action groups that can operate by consensus.

Other resources and periodicals:

*Associates for Youth Development, Inc., 5423 East Fairmount Place, Tucson, AZ 85712. Phone (602) 325-2649. A non-profit organization which provides technical assistance and training in youth development, delinquency prevention, juvenile justice and correction. They also run community development workshops. *New Designs for Youth Development*--articles on these areas in newsletter format, 6 times annually, $18.00/year.

Current Information Service: Three separate newsletters published quarterly by the Mental Health Materials Center. *Best in Print* (formerly titled *News, Notes & Ideas*) reviews twenty to thirty print materials. *Sneak Previews* reviews approximately sixty films, and *In-Depth Reports* features a current program description. All three newsletters cover mental health areas such as stress, parenting, coping, drug use, the elderly and prevention. The reviews are part of a larger volume, *Selected Guide*, published by the MHMC. Subscription price is for all three newsletters. They are not available individually. $38.00/year (Mental Health Materials Center, 30 East 29th Street, New York, NY 10016).

**Interracial Books for Children:* An excellent magazine (8 issues/year) for helping professionals searching for interracial and non-sexist materials for young people. Each issue contains articles and regular "departments": editorials, reviews, and evaluations of books and films. Many of the materials listed deal with being young, healthy and happy. Subscription prices vary. Write: Council on Interracial Books for Children, Inc., 1841 Broadway, New York, NY 10023.

**The Journal of Alternative Human Resources:* A good resource for ideas and places to obtain help in making community changes. For subscription information write to Community Congress of San Diego, 1172 Morena Blvd., San Diego, CA 92110. From the same publishers: *Guide to Resources in Alternative Human Services* ($3.00).

**Youth Alternatives:* Monthly magazine published by the National Youth Work Alliance. *YA* offers articles on federal programs and initiatives in youth development, youth employment, the juvenile justice system and funding opportunities. Listings of organizations, conferences and resources. Subscription prices vary. Write: National Youth Work Alliance, Publications Office, 1346 Connecticut Ave.-NW, Washington, DC 20036.

Appendix

The following information and exercises will help you think about how to handle various types of behavior in your group. (Exerpted from *The Powers of Positive Parenting--Facilitator's Handbook*, National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, pp. 26-8.)

Using and Reading Body Language

Using Body Language. Gestures, postures, and other nonverbal signals are excellent tools to use in conducting and coordinating your group without interrupting the flow of the conversation. Some of the most useful of these signals for you to use are noted below.

A. Pointing: Instead of interrupting to ask John if he has anything to add, simply point to him. (In this context, pointing *is* polite.) Sometimes, by pointing to first one person then another, then back again to the first, you can engineer a dialogue, thus avoiding two separate monologues. Pointing can also be an effective way of shifting away from a participant who has been monopolizing the conversation.

B. The policeman's signal to stop is another universally recognized clue. Use it to halt someone who is getting off the subject or to call a pause in the discussion.

C. Encouragement to continue can be indicated by an adaptation of the policeman's "move on" signal. Express the signal using only the hand--not the arm--when you need to signal a participant to continue on his or her present train of thought or to elaborate with more detail.

D. The cupped ear mannerism of the hard-of-hearing can be used both to signal someone to speak louder and to encourage comment from the group. "Do I hear anyone who disagrees?"

E. The direction of your attention is itself a powerful signal. As long as you look intently at the person speaking, he or she will be encouraged to continue; but if you look away at someone else or at papers before you, the flow of the participant's speech will often be cut short. This may be an effective technique for gently cutting off one who has been doing too much of the talking--although some will require a much broader hint than this before they give up the floor! By the same token, expectant looks at one who has not yet spoken out may encourage the person to make a contribution.

These are, of course, only a few of the most common and most useful body signals. Probably you use or recognize dozens of other such signals. Over the next few days, make a point of observing these in yourself and others. When you prepare for each session, practice some of these nonverbal means of communication in ways to facilitate the group discussion.

Reading body language: In the section above, we discussed how you can use mannerisms, gestures, and movements to communicate to the participants without using words.

But body language works both ways. Be alert to the body signals which the participants are sending *back to you* during the sessions. If you are alert to their significance, these almost hidden mannerisms can speak as loudly as words, even though the senders themselves may not be consciously aware of what they are "saying."

Facial expressions or gestures are signals we see so often that we have no trouble determining their meaning if we look for them. These include smiles, frowns, sighs, expressions of puzzlement, nodding, or shaking the head. How you react to these will, of course, be shaped by the situation. If you see a frown or other sign of disagreement, try to ask that person to express for the group his or her thoughts or feelings. Signals of puzzlement such as head scratching, or a certain shrugging of the shoulders, may indicate that you should see that the subject is explained in more detail, or that concrete examples are given.

But do not overreact! Head scratching may really mean an itchy head. A sigh may mean fatigue, or a frown a headache. You probably already know how to tell the differences or soon will with experience. What is important is for you to be aware that signs of body language may offer useful clues about how to improve your presentation.

Eye contact normally is a sign of interest and of having nothing to hide. But "glazed" eyes--the unblinking stare of someone who is mentally far away--may be a sign of tiredness, boredom, or lack of interest in the subject. Obviously, if the entire group has glazed eyes, better think about closing up for the day!

Throat clearing, if done to excess, is usually a sign of nervousness (or a sore throat). Perhaps the individual is afraid of being called on because of the emotional impact of the subject matter on him or her.

A person's position in the chair can tell you a good deal about how she or he is feeling. If the person is sitting forward, "on the edge of the seat," chances are she or he is alert and interested. But if, on the other hand, the participant is leaning back carelessly in the chair, it may signal reactions of boredom and disinterest.

Fidgeting, such as drumming fingers on the table or absent-mindedly clicking a ballpoint pen open and closed, can indicate boredom, restlessness, or tiredness--or the fact that the chairs are uncomfortable. Consider calling a break.

Match the body language signs with their possible meaning:

__ a. Frowning	1. Displeasure or disagreement
__ b. Throat clearing	2. Restlessness or boredom
__ c. Faraway look in eyes	3. Agreement with what is being said
__ d. Nodding head	4. Nervousness
__ e. Sitting up and watching speaker	5. Interest and alertness

Feedback: a-1, b-4, c-2, d-3, e-5.

Moderator Guidelines

Use the following exercises to assist you in carrying out your facilitator activities.

A facilitator knows how to handle the Recognition Seeker, the Conversationalist, and the Rambler.

These individuals, while they often mean well, continually bring the discussion back to incidents involving themselves, use the word "I, I, I ...," let the conversation get off on a tangent, and talk incessantly.

What one or more of these strategies would you use in dealing with these three characters?

__ a. "Mr. X, please be quiet for a while so someone else can get a word in."

__ b. "Thank you for expressing your opinion, Mr. X. Now let's hear from some of the others."

__ c. "This seems to be a point of considerable interest, but unfortunately, it's taking us a little off our main point. Perhaps those who wish to discuss it further can get together after the session."

Feedback: (b or c). Though you may feel like using (a) sometimes to a "windbag," the chance of hurting feelings is not worth the impulse.

The facilitator knows how to handle the Silent Partner.

If this kind of person were to leave the meeting and all the participants were blind, no one would ever know or be aware of the silent partner's absence because he or she says so little.

How would you handle a silent partner?

__ a. "Come on, quick, say something. Don't just sit there."

__ b. Look expectantly at Mark to encourage him to speak.

__ c. "Mark, have you any thoughts on that?"

__ d. "Mark, you look like you have something to say."

Feedback: (b, c and d). All three are recommended but definitely *not* (a). Mark is probably shy, and if you put him on the spot with a comment like (a), he will surely slide under the table and stay there.

A facilitator knows how to handle the Sophisticate.

This is the person who assumes the adolescent attitude of "knows it all and bored to death." Often couples this facial expression with fidgeting.

How would you handle a sophisticate?

__ a. Ignore him or her and maybe the person will be gone next time.

__ b. Ask why he or she feels so superior.

__ c. "Sting" him or her by asking a tough question when the person is off guard. Once he or she's been humiliated, maybe the person will rejoin the human race.

__ d. Try to bring the person into the discussion using the same techniques as with "Mark, the Silent Partner."

Feedback: (d). Chances are the bored facade is just a defense. For one reason or another, he or she's afraid to show real interest, so (d) is best.

A facilitator knows how to handle the Moralizer.

We all know those "preachy" and judgmental sermonizers who delight in delivering themselves of sermons on the evil of various things. But what do you do if you find the Moralizer in your group?

How would you handle a moralizer?

__ a. When the moralizer has issued a sermon, ask him or her to explain the reasoning behind the sermon.

__ b. Try to balance his or her comments by calling on someone you suspect has opposed views.

Feedback: (a and b). Both strategies are good. It is important to ask him or her to explain his or her reasoning, for this may cause fresh thinking on his or her position--which may be one inherited and never thought through. Also, try to see that both sides are aired by calling on his or her opposite number. There is nothing like the interplay of ideas to provide depth in a learning environment.

The facilitator is ready for the Conservative.

This individual will accept solutions only if they don't rock the boat.

How would you handle the conservative?

__ a. Recognize that he is entitled to his own views so long as he doesn't try to impose his outlook on others.

__ b. Ask him what solutions he would support, pointing out as you do that existing methods have not yet solved the problem.

Feedback: Both (a) and (b) are acceptable.

The facilitator is ready for the Aggressor.

This type of person carries the attack to the person rather than to his or her ideas. He or she might say, for example, "Someone would have to be really stupid to believe that."

How would you handle the aggressor?

__ a. Normally let the group handle it. Intervene only if necessary to protect the person being attacked.

__ b. Ask him or her to leave if he or she can't behave.

__ c. Tell him or her just how ignorant and bad mannered it is to attack persons with ideas that differ from one's own.

Feedback: Generally (a) is the best strategy.

A facilitator is ready to cope with the Champion Seeker.

This person is a follower, looking for someone else to do his thinking.

How would you handle the champion seeker?

__ a. Let him follow who or what he pleases, but first make sure that he is aware of all the alternatives.

__ b. Explain why the idea of the author of the article he has just read won't work.

Feedback: (a). If you selected (b), you have forgotten that the facilitator should try to be nonjudgmental. We recommend (a).

A facilitator is ready for the Rationalist.

This is the too-cerebral individual who can't deal effectively with feelings. She is convinced that all problems can be solved logically, that emotional factors are irrelevant.

How should the facilitator cope with the rationalist?

__ a. Hope that she will develop a better awareness of the emotional sides to these issues from listening to and interacting with the others.

__ b. Take her aside and say, "You're a real cold fish, and it's time you learned that people aren't made of stone."

Feedback: Answer (b) is totally inappropriate.

The facilitator is ready for the Theorizer.

This is the person who talks in abstract terms without relating his or her ideas to real-world concrete problems.

How would you handle the theorizer?

__ a. Ask, "How did you arrive at that conclusion?"

__ b. Say, "Can you give us an example?"

__ c. Say, "I'm not sure I understand. Can you tell us a little more?"

__ d. Ask, "Are there any situations in which that wouldn't apply?"

__ e. Move your hand like a policeperson waving on traffic.

Feedback: (a, b, c, d, and e). All of these are effective techniques in drawing out one who is too abstract or too brief.

The facilitator is ready for the Fatalist.

This person kills discussions on any subject by throwing in the towel. "If people are going to drink too much, they are just going to, and there's nothing we can do about it."

How would you handle the fatalist?

__ a. Ask him or her to be more positive.

__ b. Cite examples in which adverse drinking habits have been changed for the better.

__ c. There is little that you can do except make sure he or she does not get the chance to say much in the discussions so that the pessimism does not get spread.

Feedback: (a and b). Answer (c) is not appropriate because everyone has a chance to speak.

The facilitator should be ready for the Thinker.

This is the individual who is neither shy nor a daydreamer, but who just sits there during the session, taking it all in. From the fact that his or her attention follows the speaker, you know that the person is involved. A couple of times you have tried asking how he or she would respond to points that have been raised, but he or she doesn't say much.

How would you cope with the thinker?

__ a. Keep coming back with questions until the person finally takes an active part.

__ b. Recognize that even though not talking much, he or she is participating in the fashion that is best for him or her. Therefore, wait for the person to make the next move.

Feedback: This is a matter of judgment, based on the individual. Either could be correct, depending on the circumstances. But in general, remember that one can be participating even though not talking. Very possibly if you leave him or her alone, you will find that he or she says some of the more thoughtful and intelligent things because of taking the time to think before speaking.